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LIFE OF
GENERAL JOFFRE



Photo Henri Manuel

GENERAL JOFFRE

LIFE OF GENERAL JOFFRE

COOPER'S SON WHO BECAME
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

BY

ALEXANDER KAHN, B.A.

WITH PORTRAIT

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GENERAL JOFFRE'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE

IN the year 1852, on the Fourteenth of January, at ten o'clock in the morning, there appeared before us, LAMOUROUX Louis, mayor and civil officer of the Commune of Rivesaltes, district of Perpignan, department of Pyrénées-Orientales, Gilles JOFFRE, cooper, 29 years of age, domiciled at Rivesaltes, who reported the birth of a child of masculine sex, born on the 12th inst., at 8 o'clock in the morning, in his house located in the town, of whom the parents are he, Gilles JOFFRE, and Catherine PLAS, his wife, no profession, 29 years of age, of Rivesaltes, and that he intended to name the aforesaid child Jacques-Joseph-Césaire. This declaration was made in the presence of Etienne BERDAGNE, wine-grower, 50 years of age, and of Jean-Pierre-Raymond RAZOUS, former clerk of a notary, 25 years of age, both residents of Rivesaltes, and the legal witnesses who signed this document together with us and the father after having read it.

GILLES JOFFRE.

PIERRE RAZOUS.

E. BERDAGNE.

L. LAMOUROUX.

LIFE OF GENERAL JOFFRE

CHAPTER I

THE SON OF A COOPER

ONLY three generations of Joffres can be traced on the registry books of France.

It was on June 18, 1779, that the first Joffre was entered among the births of the year in the sleepy town of Rivesaltes in the Pyrenean mountains. He was given the name of Gilles, and as far as his fragmentary history can be traced he was the son of a Spanish refugee who fled his own country for political reasons. This refugee's name is believed to have been Gouffré, which he transformed into the French form of Joffre.

Gouffré or Joffre was not a prosperous man, but his industry was known throughout the adjacent country, where the general opinion reigned that he was far too honest to be a successful merchant. When he died it was his son, also named Gilles, and born

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on December 19, 1822, who succeeded him in the humble establishment at Rivesaltes. Like his father, he apparently had a very hard struggle for existence, and, though the family never knew real want it never reached any measure of comfort or prosperity.

Gilles Joffre, the second, was the father of several daughters, and at one time it seemed that the direct family line of the Spanish refugee was to come to an end, when at the age of forty-three there was born to him a son, who was destined to be the father of the man whom future history will call the Saviour of France.

Soon after the birth of the boy, Gilles Joffre's wife died, and the child grew neglected and uncared for; but so sound was the kernel of honesty and industry he inherited from his grandfather that, instead of joining one of the numerous bands of freebooters and adventurers that infested the Pyrénées at that time, no sooner did he grow old enough to learn a trade, than he applied for work to a cooper, and local winegrowers still have a saying about "a barrel as good as Gilles Joffre used to make."

The dreams of riches through commerce seemed to have become extinct in the Joffre family with the advent of this cooper. Gilles

Joffre was content to remain a simple labourer until his marriage, on the date of which, together with the small dowry brought to him by his wife, he came into possession of the tiny inheritance left to him by his mother.

With this money he started out as a proprietor of a shop of his own, and in the home he built for himself and his wife in the narrow tortuous street that used to be called the "Rue des Religieuses," there was born on January 12, 1852, his first child, who was named Joseph-Jacques-Césaire Joffre, and who grew to be the present Généralissime of the French Army.

The humble home in the Rue des Religieuses by the side of the shop, came to harbour in the course of time eleven children of which but three—two brothers and a sister, Madame Artus, the widow of a captain of artillery—remain alive to-day.

The town of Rivesaltes stands on the banks of the river Agly about nine miles from the city of Perpignan. It is a town of bleak and forbidding aspect with about 6000 inhabitants. The Joffre home, now 11, Rue de Orangers, is like its neighbours, humble, plain, and inartistic, and its interior construction is quite primitive compared

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with the modern dwelling of an average workman.

As late as 1885 Gilles Joffre continued to live in the Rue des Religieuses dwelling, and then he was induced to change his domicile for a more pretentious home on one of the Boulevards of Rivesaltes.

The childhood of General Joffre differed but little from the childhood of thousands of other boys and girls who went to school and played in the streets of Rivesaltes with him.

He was a good scholar, but not brilliant ; neither was he industrious to a degree to justify the saying that—"Industry and tenacity of purpose are the essential qualities of true genius." But he was silent !

"My mother used to say that she remembered the General's mother saying that when a baby in the cradle the General never cried," declare several old residents of Rivesaltes ; but if this statement may be taken as an exaggeration, the fact remains that the schoolmates of General Joffre remember better than anything else his unwillingness to talk, his peculiar gift of silence that later years has come to be known as "Joffre's taciturnity."

It is in vain to seek for anecdotes of

General Joffre's childhood. It seems that the boy lacked the ability to make himself popular with other boys. For that matter, he was an obstinate child and preferred even then lonely rambles to play with his school-mates. Thus it comes that, despite the pride at having the right to claim the honour of having been at school with General Joffre, the older citizens of Rivesaltes rack their memory in vain to recall a single incident that could serve as a prediction of their class-mate's future greatness.

It was only when he was placed in the college of Perpignan that his nature suddenly changed, and he became one of the most studious pupils, a circumstance that did not serve to increase his popularity. It is said that he used to erect a wall of books between himself and his neighbours so as not to be interrupted in his studies. However that may be, his name appears among the prize-winners of the school as having particularly excelled in mathematics, descriptive geometry, and drawing.

A military career for one of its members was the treasured dream of every French bourgeois household during the Second Empire. As in the days before the great revolution, no noble family but counted one or

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more of its members among the clergy, so in the days of Napoleon III, the middle class home yearned after a military distinction for its sons.

France needed men for her army, and the army became a great democratic institution since the nobility had been decimated and exiled during the Revolutionary period.

Gilles Joffre succeeded in business better than his father or grandfather, and after years of tireless work achieved comparative prosperity. While not a pillar of the community nor a leader of society, he enjoyed the respect of his fellow citizens, and it was quite natural that he should have begun to aspire for another future for his eldest son, than that of the head of the barrel-making and wine dealing establishment.

The boy's future career was decided at a family council, in which, according to local report, took part all the boon companions of Gilles Joffre. It was there arranged to send the boy to Paris to prepare for the Polytechnic.

Joseph Joffre left his parental home at the age of fifteen and a half. When he again returned to Rivesaltes, he had already taken part and distinguished himself in the war of 1870.

It was Gilles Joffre himself who brought his

boy to Paris in 1867, at the time when the capital of France was by far the gayest city on the Continent.

They are a silent race these Catalonians. The advice of the father was contained in a long and earnest look ; the promise of the boy was in the form of a firm handshake. The boy was left in a private school, long since disappeared, and for two years he studied and worked, hardly allowing himself a holiday, a sombre figure amongst his light-hearted comrades, an awkward youth in the midst of the over-bred children of that period.

General Joffre himself is not given to reminiscences, and if there are any of his companions of the time still living they could hardly be expected to remember the exploits of a boy who lacked the distinguishing earmarks of genius to such an extent that even as late as 1911, when M. Caillaux, then Prime Minister, and M. Messimy, then War Secretary, urged upon President Fallières General Joffre's eventual appointment as Généralissime, the public at large was asking—" Joffre ? But who is Joffre ? "

No record of a striking exploit on his part whilst at this private school can be found ; no saying of his that would be out

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of the ordinary is known ; Joffre was but one of the grey mass of pupils. Diligent ? Very. Brilliant ? Not he.

Yes ! there is a characteristic trait of the then schoolboy, that is frequently referred to in the immediate family circle, but which, if noticed at all, by teachers or pupils, was probably ascribed to an absence of linguistic aptitude—General Joffre could not master German, and was, in consequence, the fourteenth on the list of successful candidates to be admitted to the Polytechnic.

General Joffre knows German now ; but it is significant that, even before the Prussians succeeded in humiliating France, the Frenchman who was to be chosen to humiliate Prussia, felt an aversion to the language of the foe.

CHAPTER II

LIFE AT THE POLYTECHNIC

IT was in 1869 that General Joffre entered the Polytechnic. It was but a year later that, with the rank of second lieutenant, he entered the army that defended Paris against the besieging Prussians.

This was more than forty-four years ago. A lad of but eighteen years, General Joffre fought for a lost cause. He saw his country torn and bleeding ; he saw the proud standard of France brought to the dust by a centuries-old enemy ; he saw Alsace and Lorraine cut off from their mother country ; he saw France's pride trampled underfoot by the brutal Bismarck ; he heard the wails of widowed women and orphaned children ; but if he suffered, if he resented, if he craved revenge, he said no word. Silent Joffre he was before the war ; silent Joffre he remained through the war, silent Joffre he was all through the years that came after, and silent Joffre he is to-day leading France's armies in the cause of all humanity.

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"I remember Joffre at the Polytechnic, but only very hazily," said a retired captain. "He would not know my name were it mentioned to him, and he would surely be angry were he to know that any one of his former comrades spoke of him, for orders, formal orders, have been issued practically forbidding the giving out of any details of the General's former or present life."

As far as the General's youth is concerned no such orders were really necessary. The school records give but little information. Whatever testimony can be gathered on the subject, and it must be remembered that all such testimony is coloured by the glory of the General's present position, it indicates a lovable nature, shy and not given to demonstration, with self-restraint in constant evidence, with thoroughness as a leading quality, with a readiness to face squarely every issue, deeply given to thought and to dream dreams.

"Scratch a Catalonian and you discover a poet." A reliable witness, M. Emile Hinzelin, declares that the student Joffre once composed a poem in honour of Alsace-Lorraine, after the war of 1870, of which the first two lines were :

*J'ai pour reve d'espoir et vision d'amour
L'eclair de nos fusils en marche sur Strasbourg*

or in English, "The dreams of my hope and the visions of my love lie in seeing our rifles resume the march on Strasbourg"; more prophetic perhaps than poetic.

On the other hand it is recounted in Rivesaltes that at the age of eleven General Joffre was asked to join in a game by the boys of the neighbourhood. He refused on the plea of having lessons to prepare. Taunts failed as well as cajolings. It was hard even then to swerve Joseph Joffre from his purpose.

Exasperated, the leader of the boys struck a vicious blow at the eleven-year-old Joffre. For once the lessons were forgotten, quiet Joseph became a warring lion; but the battle over, he calmly picked up his books and hurried home to make up for lost time.

With the exception of actual warfare, this is the only record of a fight in General Joffre's life.

Straggling memories of men, who are eager to remedy the lack of interest they exhibited in the man, who at present fills popular imagination in France to the same extent as did Napoleon a hundred years ago, show that, if not greatly liked because of his reticence, Joffre was respected while a student at the Polytechnic. The truth of this is borne out to a great extent by the fact that General

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Joffre's career is singularly free from jealousy. If he did not make friends, neither did he make enemies. He never blew his horn, being willing to let the results of his work speak for themselves, nor did he have others sing his praises, and, consequently, he is beholden to no one for his achievements.

CHAPTER III

ENTERS THE ARMY

FROM the very beginning of his life General Joffre has seemed to move along a straight line, and it is more than probable that the General of to-day differs but little in his mental and moral make-up from the student of forty-five years ago.

Neither by the stroke of chance nor through his own aggressiveness did Second-Lieutenant Joffre distinguish himself in the campaign of 1870. "He did his work and did it well," declared one of his former superior officers in speaking of that disastrous campaign.

It is hard to make General Joffre himself speak of that period. As a matter of fact it is impossible to make him speak of himself at all. He is not a sociable man, and there is nothing that would lead one to suppose that he was any different at the beginning of his career.

He saw the Prussians sweep before them the French resistance, but even in his youthful

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enthusiasm he conceived no dare-devil plan to destroy the foe, as many another young French officer of that time did, paying with his life for the attempt. He witnessed the Commune with all its horrors, and unlike young Bonaparte, he dreamed not of subduing the mob to his own will, but most likely of his studies so rudely interrupted by the war.

Those who know the General do not hesitate to assert that the goddess of chance never smiled upon him too kindly, for whatever he is, and whatever he has accomplished, was due to constant application to the problems to be solved. His love of study, his joy at having performed a difficult task were the cause of the only recorded outburst of enthusiasm on his part.

Years after the siege of Paris, Captain Joffre, while inspecting some fortifications at Versailles, fell with his horse and was so badly injured that a long rest was ordered. He went to Rivesaltes and there, in the loneliness of his room, he passed days of agony, waiting to see whether or no the verdict of the physicians that he would never again be able to resume his mathematical studies would come true.

Not a word of complaint escaped his lips,

not a sign of anxiety showed on his face, as he asked for pen and ink and set himself arduously to the task of solving the most complicated and difficult mathematical problems.

Day after day passed, and whenever his anxious relatives tip-toed into the room, they always found him hard at work, tearing up sheets of paper and recommencing his calculations.

The Joffres are not given to demonstrative speeches or acts, but the General's sister confesses that the family began to worry, lest the disappointment of being unable to pursue his life's work would upset his mind.

One evening, as his father was getting ready to go to sleep, the future Généralissime burst into his room, joyously shouting: "It's all right! I'm well! I'm saved!"

He had succeeded in solving a most abstruse and intricate problem, and his joy at having recovered his mental capacity was so great as to overcome his physical sufferings.

But to return, the moment the war of 1870 was over, and peace was signed, young Joffre re-entered the school, and about two years later graduated as full lieutenant. He was but one of scores of other young men who had chosen the army as their profession. No

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predictions as to his future success were made—army promotions are slow and tedious when there is no war, and France then had no thoughts of anything but peace.

Perhaps, in his Pyrenean home, an old father hoped to see his eldest son become a General; perhaps his brothers and sisters believed firmly and staunchly in his star; but even they said nothing, save to wish him God-speed.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE AS A SOLDIER

THEN began for him the uneventful life of a soldier in days of peace.

Graduating from the military school did not mean to him the cessation of his studies. Quite the contrary. He worked as hard if not harder, at his beloved mathematics ; but if he planned anything beyond his immediate duties, he kept it a strict secret to himself.

Little is known of the life he led during that period. If he had any companions they have thus far failed to come forward to claim the distinction ; if he made any friends, they remain unknown.

“ Joffre ? Who is Joffre ? ” would have been the answer of most lieutenants in the Paris garrison had they been asked about their silent comrade-in-arms.

One day Field-Marshal MacMahon happened to visit the section of the fortifications being constructed under Joffre’s supervision. He was so surprised at the perfect manner of the

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work, that, turning to the youthful officer, he said : " I congratulate you, Captain ! "

This was in 1876. Joseph Joffre became a captain at twenty-four years of age.

This sudden promotion was the only piece of luck, mere luck, that has ever occurred to General Joffre. However, his work was recognized, and his promotion meant greater opportunity for the application of his ability.

If the Joffres suffer from an inability to make friends easily it is not due to any form of boastful pride.

Joseph Joffre may have kept aloof from his army associates, he may have shunned social duties, or again, he may have been so absorbed by his work as to neglect every other phase of life, but it was not due to any false pride, for the Joffres are level-headed, and they have the faith in themselves that justifies, in their own eyes, whatever honours may come to them. The General Joffre of to-day, reticent as he may be, is as simple in his manner and behaviour as were his father and grandfather before him.

It is said that when Joseph Joffre, newly made a general, came on one of his frequent visits to Rivesaltes, one of his father's neighbours who used to address him always in the pronoun " thou," as is the custom in the

French rustic communities, haltingly began his speech with the pronoun "you."

The General stopped him.

"I did not dare to say 'thou' to him," explained the old man afterwards. "But he wouldn't listen to me. 'Thou' it was until now, and 'thou' it will remain he said. So I never bothered any more."

Of strong physical build, of clean habits and of great moral strength, Captain Joffre never found his loneliness a burden. He was a glutton for work, and he loved his work.

No doubt he was ambitious, but those who know him best declare that, were he still nothing more than a captain, he would be as happy as, if not happier than, he is to-day, holding the position of the man upon whom the eyes of the whole world are centred at present.

He worked at building fortifications in Paris, Versailles, Montpellier; he built barracks in Brittany; he went where he was sent, always doing his work a little better than was demanded of him, and always finding sufficient reward in the accomplishment of the task.

From 1876 until 1884 Joffre led the usual life of a garrison officer. Promotion was slow. The army in France lost to a great extent at

that time its power as a military force, and became in the same degree the field for political intrigues.

There were a good many hot-heads shouting for revenge on Germany ; but France was too prosperous to contemplate a repetition of the horrors and losses of war. Paul Déroulède was composing his patriotic songs and founding his patriotic league, but he was frowned upon by the middle classes. Royalists succeeded now and again in stirring up fears for the Republic's existence ; but, while the Republic became part and parcel of France's national existence, Paris ceased to be the centre that dictated to the rest of the country what should or should not be done.

General Boulanger came and went, and with him went the last hope of the Royalists of forcing a military dictatorship and a subsequent royal regime upon France.

The war of 1870 sounded the death-knell of hero-worship in France.

So many idols proved but earthenware images, so many "hopes" developed into bitter disappointments, that the people at large were content with the political system of the day, so long as it involved them in no wild adventures.

If the army continued a worshipped insti-

tution with the seekers of a "revanche," to the average French citizen it became but a burdensome necessity and its leaders a subject of unpleasant memories.

Not only did the army become under such circumstances a favourite field for playing for popular favour by whoever happened to be Secretary of War ; but the Republican Government, possibly more from an idea of self-preservation than out of love for democratic rule, saw to it that no over-strong or ambitious man was placed at the head of the military arm of Government.

Not that Joffre, silent and somewhat morose, could have excited the popular fancy. He lacked political pull, and, still more, the opportunity to prove his sterling qualities as an organizer, for army organization, which means the welding of the army into a compact machine that obeys the orders of its chief, was exactly what the politicians did not want.

The men who were then guiding the destinies of France could not be accused of being unpatriotic. But the treaty with Russia seemed a sufficient guarantee that Germany would not dare to attack again, and the French people, with some exceptions, became thorough pacifists and were willing to forgive

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and forget the brutal seizure of Alsace and Lorraine.

Perhaps Joffre, to-day "Our Joffre," fretted at the lack of opportunity; but he loved his vocation and he applied himself with zeal and zest to the construction of fortifications, and when work languished he studied. He studied to improve his knowledge, he studied to obtain pleasure, and he studied for the very love of study.

The years went by. Joffre's tousled thick hair began to show streaks of gray. His face began to show deep lines. Still he was only a captain.

The unspoken question in the eyes of his father whenever he greeted his eldest son on the latter's visits to Rivesaltes remained unanswered, and it began to seem as if the old man's secret dream of having a general in his family was doomed never to be realised.

There is one remarkable feature of the human side of General Joffre. He seemed to revel in being lonely. He never sought noisy distractions to help revive his drooping spirits or to drive away his fits of melancholy. A game of cards with his father is the only gambling he has ever been credited with, and this game has ever been "manille," as innocent of complications as any child's amuse-

ment. Sometimes his relatives and his father's friends would take part in the game, and he would have been indeed a far-seeing prophet who would have predicted that the quiet officer, whose features lacked either the aquilinity of Cæsar or the determination of Wellington, would be called upon one day to play as great, if not a greater, part than either of these great figures of history.

It was during one of these games that General Joffre made the now famous remark, by the way, the only famous saying of this silent man, while advising his father to dig oblique trenches on the family property at Bompas, in order to facilitate the irrigation and prevent the annual inundations in spring time.

"Eh ! que diable," he exclaimed when his father argued against the innovation, "je m'y connais en tranchées ; c'est mon métier !" What General Joffre, in a rather irreverent way, declared means in good English : "What the devil ! I know all about trenches ; trenches are my speciality."

The war of 1914 will go down in history as the war of trenches, and General Joffre is master of the art.

CHAPTER V

THE STARTING-POINT

“**M**Y brother was always lost in thought, and no matter what he did his thoughts never left him,” tells his sister, Madame Artus, who, unlike the General himself, loves to talk of her illustrious brother, although admitting that she does so in fear and trembling, as the General has forbidden any one of his family to make of him a subject of reminiscences. “Any one who knows him at all knows also his favourite gesture of passing his hand across his forehead, as though driving away a persistent idea. He loves long walks, and he loves to walk alone. Few know that he was once arrested for a spy.

“He came to Rivesaltes on a visit, and one day he walked as far as the cité de Prats-de-Mollo. The famous fort constructed by Vauban attracted his attention, and he began to examine it with the interest of a professional fortress builder. The corporal of the battery decided that the man in the civilian dress was

nothing but a German spy, so he promptly arrested him.

“ Did my brother protest ? Not he. He permitted himself to be brought before the officer, and proved not to be a German by speaking in as broad a Catalonian dialect as only a native of the Pyrenees could do.

“ ‘ Why did you not tell them whom you were ? ’ we asked him on his return. ‘ I was thinking of the fort,’ he replied, unconscious of anything unusual in his behaviour.”

It was not until 1884 that Joffre was officially recognised as the master of the art of building fortifications.

His work was noticed, and, when Admiral Courbet telegraphed from Kelong, the port on the Island of Formosa, for an officer who understood thoroughly the way to dig trenches and to erect forts, Joffre was chosen for the task.

Strictly speaking, this was the starting-point of General Joffre's career.

It was at the period when this troubled island seemed essential to French interests in Asia. The island's riches had attracted already the Spaniards, but neither they, nor the Chinese, nor the Japanese, who appeared on the scene in 1874, proved equal to the difficulties presented by the topographical

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conditions, the climate and the savage population.

France's occupation of Kelong was but of one year's duration, but it was important in establishing French rights, and excluding from Formosa the growing German influence in the Far East.

Captain Joffre, for he still was but a captain, was put to work on the tremendous task of making Kelong a formidable fortress. To paraphrase the immortal words of Tennyson,

*His was not to reason why
His was to do and try,"*

and Captain Joffre set to work without a moment's thought of the fact that the task set before him was insurmountable in view of the lack of men and of material.

When the Japanese by the treaty of Simonoseki came into lawful ownership of the island, they paid frank and honest tribute to the work of the French troops ; but at the time, save for the praise from his immediate superiors, Captain Joffre had to content himself with the satisfaction of a work well done.

And he did work ! There are still stories current of how the " silent captain " did not only his own share of the work, but performed

the duties of many other men, who preferred an easy rest during the tropical heat to fighting pestilent insects and digging trenches.

Thirty years have passed since that time. Most of the men who served with Joffre have either gone to join their forefathers or else are content to rest upon their laurels. Captain Joffre, who was frequently the butt of good-natured jokes in the officers' club, has risen to heights undreamed of then.

It was a long year of hard and thankless toil but Joffre's work was once more recognised, and he was sent to Hanoi, the capital of the province of Tonkin, Indo-China. There he occupied the position of commander of the sappers, receiving at the same time the first official thanks of the Government since the day, nine years before, when Marshal MacMahon made him a captain.

Captain Joffre was decorated with the Legion of Honour.

The work of Joffre in Indo-China forms a chapter in the history of civilisation similar, though on a much smaller scale, to the work of Colonel Getzel in Panama. As a matter of fact, were General Joffre a fame-seeking man, he could with some degree of confidence claim that the American engineers imitated

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his methods in making Hanoï a habitable place.

Not satisfied with the work that came to him in the ordinary run of events, Captain Joffre set out to rid the region over which he reigned of the pestilential marshes that infected the air causing a tremendous mortality both amongst the natives and the French soldiers.

CHAPTER VI

HIS WORK IN THE EAST

IF his immediate superiors took but little notice of his efforts, probably looking upon him as only a small cog in the governmental wheel that was endeavouring to make of Indo-China a prosperous French colony ; if his work forms now but a forgotten chapter in the history of French colonies ; there is one town in Indo-China that still remembers Joffre and his work, and that boasts of a wide avenue of few houses and no pavements which bears the proud inscription—Boulevard Joffre.

This town is Vietri, and Captain Joffre spent several months there, working, thinking, planning, and always preparing, though unconsciously, for the task that was to become his in 1914.

In 1886 Vietri was but a frontier post, erected at the junction of two small rivers. Pirates made continuous attacks upon the inhabitants, and those of the latter who escaped death at the hands of the ban-

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dits, were being ruthlessly decimated by disease.

A mounted company of the Foreign Legion and a troop of sappers formed its defending and attacking force, and Captain Joffre was at the head of the latter.

It was at Vietri that Joffre performed a task, which under other circumstances and in other surroundings would have been sufficient to gain for him fame and recognition. When he came, Vietri was a plague-beset town ; when he left, Vietri might have been a village transplanted from the French Riviera to the tropics.

Even to-day, an Annamite mother lulling her baby to sleep may be heard muttering something about the " man of the eyebrows," and hardly any one of the white residents overhearing her would suspect that she refers to no one else but Captain, now Généralissime Joffre.

He certainly left his imprint upon Vietri, and the natives, with the aptitude of savages, noticed the peculiarity of his enormous eyebrows and named this white chief " the man of the eyebrows." Since General Joffre has come to occupy the centre of the world's stage, the Annamite appellation " Y en Ong Daumat," in French " L'homme aux sourcils "

has been spread to the four corners of the earth.

Not even the tropical climate, the loneliness of the evenings in what to every white man must have been the wilderness of despair, failed to change Captain Joffre's mentality or his behaviour towards his fellow men.

He lived alone, out of choice ; whenever free from duty, he buried himself in papers and books ; he worked incessantly and never appeared tired. Then as now his capacity for work knew no bounds.

" This Captain was a solidly built Pyrenean, calm and clear-headed, with a firm walk and a hard blue eye," says a contemporary of his in Indo-China. " He seldom smiled, he spoke still more rarely, and he never punished unless in an extreme case, but then it was a hard punishment. The natives feared him because of his silence ; they loved him because of his justice."

This picture of Joffre of twenty-nine years ago may serve as a picture of him to-day. Justice in the eyes of Joffre meant and means, before everything else, conscientiousness in performing a given task.

Although helping to pave the way for the French domination in the Far East, Captain Joffre's life of that time did not abound in

adventures. The glory of a daring exploit, the joy of a dashing attack, are not the lot of a soldier whose energies and ability are devoted to building fortifications and digging trenches. Still, Joffre's life was far from being monotonous.

Were General Joffre a man of industrial pursuits instead of a soldier, he would have no doubt been the father of a labour-saving system, for all his efforts, from the very beginning of his career, have been dominated not only by the desire to bring to bear upon the work in hand scientific perfection, but also by the intention to do it at the smallest expenditure of physical force.

No wonder that, if his subordinates did not adore him because of his reticence, they respected him as few men were or will be respected by those they command.

"Method is the mother of great achievement," has become a trite saying in this age in which a witty Frenchman declared that "Inspiration was the source of all true folly." Method and Joffre are synonymous.

Captain Joffre had no great opportunity for distinction. A man who was doing his work and was content to remain practically unknown at a period in French history when it was necessary to blow one's own trumpet

if rapid reward was desired, was very apt to be overlooked in the list of promotions.

When Joffre left Indo-China in 1888, he was still a Captain, and no one thought, he himself probably least of all, that he was in the future to write some of the most important pages in the history of France.

If he was disappointed, no one heard of it. He did his duty, he loved his work, and when he came to Rivesaltes to visit his old father, he never breathed a word about promotion, nor was he asked about it.

But he continued to study and to learn. If it is true that a physician's course of study never ends, it is equally true in regard to a man in the engineering profession. To know all new ideas and to be able to apply them in practice with certitude as to results, this is the ideal of the man who helps to build, no matter what direction his efforts may take. Joffre is such a man, has been such a man from the earliest stages of his career.

And he continued to play the game of "manille" with his father and the latter's friends, and used the time accorded to him by his superiors for rest, in mastering to a still greater degree his profession.

But men like Joffre do not pass unnoticed. Though he himself had not lifted a finger to

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make his ability known, he nevertheless acquired the reputation of being one of the best military engineers in the army, and of one who "loved his profession to a degree which made him, politically speaking, not a dangerous man."

It must be remembered that France of that period was not the France of to-day. There is an analogy between the state of things in France then and that of South American States after the Civil War. The latter, weakened by the struggle, became the prey of northern politicians ; France, nearly broken by the unequal struggle with Germany, was at the mercy of home-bred statesmen, who put their personal profit before their country's welfare.

Captain Joffre, soldier before everything else, worker above anything else, as ruggedly honest as only those whose home is amidst sky-towering mountains are apt to be ; unable, because of his nature, to kow-tow for favours ; unwilling to secure favouritism at the loss of his pride, and certain not to insist upon recognition of his work because of modesty, was marked as a very useful man, and notice was probably taken of him that he could be used as an instrument to pave the way for the promotion of others, who were more important politically.

Joffre's arrival in France was not hailed by cheering multitudes. He came to Paris, reported himself as ready for new service and was attached to the staff of the general commanding the engineering branch of the French Army.

After the activity of his life in Formosa and Indo-China, the enforced comparative idleness of office work would have hung heavily upon the hands of any other man but Joffre. To Joffre it was but another opportunity to perfect his knowledge, and he worked at the tasks assigned him as ardently as he worked upon the fortifications of Hanoï, Kelong, and Vietri.

Perhaps because his superiors were somewhat ill at ease in the presence of this tireless Commandant ; perhaps because it was realised that office-work was not the field for him, a short time afterwards he is found as an officer on active service with the Fifth Infantry Regiment.

It would be an impossible task to trace his life in that period. Whether Joffre thought of the ungratefulness of his country or not is never to be known ; but that he made as efficient an officer in his new sphere as in the old, of that there is no doubt.

CHAPTER VII

HIS ONE ROMANCE

ONE year after his arrival in France, Captain Joffre was named Commandant, and as such he continued to be employed in the work of fortifying France against a future invasion by an enemy ; but this time he was attached to a railway regiment, a position that gave him the opportunity for the study of the railroad system of France, a study which probably accounts for the marvellous mobilisation results achieved in France at the beginning of this war.

Thirteen years had Captain Joffre to wait before getting his fourth stripe. His life was a busy one every minute of these years but many other things happened also, among them his marriage in 1884 to Mlle. Marie-Amélie Pourcheiroux, and her death one year after.

The marriage was a happy one. Captain Joffre had a pleasant bass-voice—General Joffre still loves to sing in his family circle—

his wife was a born musician, and evil tongues at Montpellier, where he spent the best part of his early married life, declare to-day that "Captain Joffre lacked dignity."

Little is known of his courtship, still less of his brief honeymoon. If an Englishman's home is his castle, a Frenchman's home is his sanctuary, and Captain Joffre had no friends, save those in distant Rivesaltes, whom he would introduce into his holy of holies.

One year after having led the woman he loved to the altar, she died.

What he suffered no one will ever know. But the Joffre who, under the influence of love, turned occasionally into a dreamer, disappeared for ever, leaving in place a man of indomitable energy and unlimited capacity for work.

Say to any of the Frenchmen who adore and venerate their war leader, that there were days when the stern-visaged warrior actually hummed a sentimental chansonette as he passed to and from his work, and a stare of incredulity would be the only reply. Tell to the generals and officers of the French General Staff that their head, whose iron will and unswerving driving power serves to them as the best assurance of success, forgot to be severe under the influence of tender love,

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and a shrug of the shoulders would be the reward for the information. Somehow, one cannot imagine General Joffre as a serenading lover. But his silence has covered and covers many traits which, if known, would make the portrait of him in the minds of the people more fixed and lovable still.

The tragedy of his wife's death did not dry up the sources of tenderness, the power of imagination, the sense of poetry in his soul ; but it made him seek forgetfulness in his work. He redoubled his efforts ; and from the year of his bereavement must be marked the second epoch in the personal development of Joffre.

This is a period in General Joffre's life which is completely obscured by an impenetrable fog. There is an absolute lack of any personal information ; but his name appears once more in public documents, when in 1891 he was appointed to the chair of fortifications at the Artillery and Military Engineering School of Fontainebleau.

Apparently some one kept an eye on Cammandant Joffre, some one was determined that his ability and knowledge should not become wasted. Rumour names that some one, as rumour would have it that throughout the subsequent career of General Joffre this

some one played the part of guardian angel to him, and that this some one is not only still among the living, but that the present war brought new laurels to his fame, for he is no one other than General Galliéni.

The Military School at Fontainebleau is intended for the graduates of the Polytechnic who, though possessing the rank of second lieutenant, wish to perfect themselves in the science of artillery and fortifications.

For two years Commandant Joffre lectured upon the construction of fortifications, and his lectures are still remembered as excellent examples of graphic description of scientific principles, lavishly interspersed with illustrations derived from his own experiences.

He taught and he learned at the same time.

"Professor Joffre was the most diligent student among us," is the comment of a grey-headed colonel, who now serves under his former teacher. "He was not popular with the students. He was too grave a man, too great a disciplinarian, too exacting an examiner. But he was respected because we all instinctively felt that he was just, and that he demanded nothing more from us than he would have demanded of himself.

"On the other hand, he was able to

implant knowledge in a miraculous way, and those who studied under him never forgot what they learned. All he taught was so methodically arranged, so clearly demonstrated, so logically presented, that he would indeed be a hopeless incapable who could not absorb knowledge imparted by Professor Joffre."

It is interesting to cast a retrospective view upon the France of that period.

If there is just complaint that the war of 1914 found France in a state of unpreparedness the fault for which must fall entirely upon the shoulders of France's politicians of the period soon following the war of 1870 and of their immediate successors, the chaos that ruled supreme in the high army circles of France at the time Joffre was lecturing at Fontainebleau can be justly described as a calamity.

Politics in the army was one of the worst features of the France of that time, a feature that was to result later in the Dreyfus affair and almost in the fall of the Republic itself.

Were Joffre a man of another temperament, he might have exhibited some annoyance at being patronizingly patted on the shoulder by his immediate superiors and told that he did well.

But Joffre is Joffre, and this means first of all, silence, and then, a philosophic mind.

When his father's neighbours were jocularly asking old Gilles Joffre as to when his son would become a general, the old man used to answer : " Bah ! Tout finit par arriver ! " Everything arrives in the end !

Commandant Joffre worked as a Professor for two years, and then he was once more called upon to leave France.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAPTURE OF TIMBUKTU

SOUDAN was now occupying public attention in France. She had need of paying colonies, and the development of her African possessions became a matter of the first importance.

While it was agreed that England must play the premier role in Africa, German aggression, the development of the Belgian Congo, and the progress of the Portuguese, made it imperative that France should no longer neglect her African territory.

The first step in this direction was logically the betterment of the roads of communication and the conquest of Timbuktu, "the mysterious."

Commandant Joffre was chosen for the work of laying a railroad between Kayes and Bafoulabé. The honour of floating the French standard over Timbuktu fell to Colonel Bonnier.

So far as Joffre was concerned the new appointment promised but very little. It was

rather an exile ; it was probably a source of disappointment to him. He little knew, and for that matter no one knew, that it was in Africa he was to find his first true glory.

Soudan at the period was the scene of constant fighting between the French troops and the Touaregs, and every inch of ground gained meant a struggle both before and after possession.

During the time Commandant Joffre was supervising the work of building the railroad, a work to which he brought, in his usual way, all his knowledge, energy and ability as organizer, other officers were winning fame in actual fighting, in punitive expeditions against the marauders who pillaged the peaceful population, in capturing native fortresses, in a word in that active life which to a soldier means both joy and recognition.

How did Commandant Joffre feel about it ? What did he think of it ? Was disillusionment beginning to take hold of him ? Was he still content with the consciousness of a task well done ?

These are questions that cannot be answered for " silent Joffre " continued his work with the same devotion as he showed when but one year out of school.

At the end of 1893 it was decided that the

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French forces were to march against Timbuktu. Colonel Bonnier commanded the expedition, and he chose Commandant Joffre to head a supporting force of more than one thousand men for the purpose of carrying provisions and ammunition for the fighting force. Commandant Joffre's "Army" had for two-thirds of its complement native carriers and servants. It was not an imposing display of power.

Colonel Bonnier, a dashing and courageous officer, paid with his life for the attempt to capture Timbuktu, and it thus fell to the unknown, and far from dashing, Commandant Joffre to bring to a successful issue one of the most noted exploits in France's colonial history.

Whatever the result, the starting of the expedition meant but little to Joffre himself. Once more he was intended to play the part of the useful aid to the brilliant man. Fate decreed otherwise.

The plan of the campaign against Timbuktu as made by Colonel Bonnier called for the main expeditionary force to go by waterway, preceded by a gunboat commanded¹ by Lieutenant Boiteux, to whom belongs the honour of having been the first to plant the French tricolour at Timbuktu, while Com-

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mandant Joffre was to follow along the left bank of the Niger and was to join his chief at Timbuktu.

Commandant Joffre started from Segou on December 27, 1893. On January 30, 1894, he learned of the dreadful fate which befell Colonel Bonnier's force. Surprised by the Touaregs at Taconbao, Bonnier, together with eleven of his officers, was slain in an attack that he failed to foresee and to prepare for.

The fleeing remnant of the expeditionary force joined Joffre's small column. The men were panic-stricken, and, had the modest Commandant listened to their advice, he would have turned back to Segou. Instead he went ahead, and on February 12 he entered Timbuktu after a march of nearly eight hundred miles under conditions that would have made the stoutest heart quake with fear and presentiment.

It is too late now to criticize Colonel Bonnier. He was a man of exuberant nature, of unquestioned courage and undoubted military ability. Probably he lacked prudence; probably he permitted dash to supplant method; probably he fell a victim to unforeseen conditions.

Commandant Joffre possessed method and he had courage; he had foresight as well as

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ardour, though the latter was hidden behind the mask of passivity. On his march to Timbuktu his column was attacked by the Touaregs ; but the tables were reversed this time. It was the Touaregs who found themselves trapped, for there was not a single instant in the long days that preceded the French entry into Timbuktu, during which Commandant Joffre was not ready to give battle on his own terms.

Calm and imperturbable, he watched over every detail, looked after everything no matter how small its importance, and never permitted his vigilance to lapse.

“ One may surprise, but to be surprised is simply criminal,” he is quoted as having once said. The saying may serve as an emblem of his career as a leader of fighting men.

He reached the place where Colonel Bonnier fell in heroic combat, and stopped his march to pay honours to the dead and to send to France the body of the Colonel.

The report sent by Commandant Joffre on this occasion is a classic from the point of view of clear exposition and vivid description. Not a word of self-glorification, not a line to indicate that the performance was accompanied by grave perils, not a paragraph of personal satisfaction.

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The report covers a period of six and a half months, and read in these days, when it practically rests with General Joffre whether or not France is to retain her place amongst the great Powers, it gives new confidence that the issue can be decided but in one way—the Joffre way—which means victory.

The report shows every minute preparation made by the Commandant, upon whom was suddenly thrust the responsibility of leading men in battle instead of supervising constructional work. It also shows such a microscopic knowledge of the country, such a deep acquaintance with the inhabitants as to prove that Commandant Joffre's study was not confined to the engineering profession alone.

The dispositions made by him of the troops under his command may serve as a model of defensive and offensive precautions. Even then he showed the quality, which has since made him one of the greatest military commanders known to history, of giving equal importance to every branch of the army, from the fighting part of it to the commissariat.

"The frost and the snow defeated Napoleon's army in Russia," is an axiom accepted by the average man.

Joffre would never accept such an excuse for himself—either he would have been

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fully guarded against such an emergency, or he would have not undertaken the campaign.

“Measure seven times, cut but once,” is an oriental proverb. It could very well serve as a motto for General Joffre. When the small French force started upon the conquest of Timbuktu, all the chances for and against success were calculated with mathematical precision, and it was Commandant Joffre who chose the place where the battles should be fought, who created the conditions under which the fighting was conducted.

Not a dramatic sentence in the whole of the report! Not a hint that the work presented insurmountable difficulties! Quite the contrary, the perusal of this report, without a preceding study into the conditions that confronted Joffre, leaves the impression that the march to Timbuktu was a feat of no more than ordinary importance.

Were it not for the tragic death of Colonel Bonnier, were it not for the previous struggles waged against the tribesmen, the accomplishment, judged only on the strength of Commandant Joffre's statement, would have been probably looked upon as an incident likely to occur in the day's work of any army commander.

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The news of the fall of Timbuktu, however, created a veritable sensation in France.

Timbuktu, long surnamed "the Mysterious," was one of the secrets of darkest Africa. Explorers knew little of it, and but few succeeded in reaching its walls. The earliest mention of it is found in the life history of the Sailor Imbert who was captured and taken there as a slave by the tribesmen. In 1858 Barth succeeded in spending a short time within its inhospitable surroundings. In 1880 the German, Lenz, paid it a brief visit, and in 1887 Lieutenant Caron anchored the gunboat he commanded in its port. But the French standard never flew over it, and no serious attempt to subjugate its inhabitants was made until the unfortunate Bonnier expedition and the subsequent triumphant entry of Commandant Joffre on February 12, 1894.

Less than one month later Commandant Joffre was made Lieutenant-Colonel.

If the Government began to take serious notice of the young officer, the public at large remained in ignorance of him. The fall and capture of Timbuktu overshadowed the name of the captor.

CHAPTER IX

THE SUBJUGATION OF THE SOUDAN

THESE were turbulent days in French military circles. The year 1894 will pass into history as one of the memorable epochs in the history of France, for it was the year in which the Dreyfus case began an era of internal discord which was to last for more than five years, threatening the very foundations of the Republic.

Although it was not until September of that year that Dreyfus was arrested, for months there were sinister rumours that "something was rotten in the state of Denmark," and public opinion was in a turbulent and excited condition.

Joffre, away in the wilderness of Soudan, was removed from all the machinations that convulsed both the army and the nation. No doubt he heard about them, but even had he been in France at the time, it is doubtful if he would have taken any part or side in the controversy, so detached and self-contained and absorbed was he in his profession.

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It must be remembered that to the contemporary "rulers" of the French Army, Joffre was an insignificant officer, able but not dangerous. He had no political value ; as an asset in a *coup d'état* he was of no importance ; besides, even in the limited circle of the men who were beginning to perceive his ability, he was merely respected.

He was not a man to excite popular imagination. He was of too stolid a character to ignite the fireworks of popular acclaim. He was too much of a disciplined soldier to dream of utilizing whatever prestige he might have acquired for personal ends.

Probably, were France at the time of the Dreyfus case ruled by a man of Napoleon's type, were the men at the helm of the French Army above the size of pygmies ; were the destinies of France really dear to their hearts, Joffre, the man of honest ruggedness, of unshakable loyalty, of enormous organizing ability, would have been called back to France to bring order out of the chaos, in which the country was plunged.

Perhaps in view of the crisis which awaited France in 1914, it was to her ultimate advantage that the man, upon whom the nation placed the task and duty of freeing it for ever from the menace of the German danger,

should have remained unsoiled and untarnished by the scandals of that black and poisonous period.

Joffre arrived at Timbuktu. No sooner had he accomplished the feat of entering the town than he received an order from the then Governor of the Soudan recalling him to Kayes to continue the laying of the railroad.

Was it jealousy? Perhaps! Was it lack of judgment on the part of his superiors? Most likely. Whatever it was, it aptly illustrates the spirit which permeated the high command of the French Army at that time.

It may be argued that chance favoured Joffre, as except for the unfortunate fate of Colonel Bonnier, his rôle would have been reduced to very modest proportions. But in tracing the causes of the brilliant result achieved by Commandant Joffre it must be admitted that success was due not to the goddess of fortune, but to Joffre's refusal to trust her in the smallest degree.

Joffre refused to obey the Governor's orders. The refusal was not prompted by any anger at his superior's lack of appreciation; it was the result of his determination to remain true to his duty. Duty has ever

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been Joffre's guiding star. He believed that circumstances imposed upon him the duty to remain, and mindless of the consequences he remained at his post. Whether because it was thought that there was no more glory to be acquired, or because Joffre's value was for once fully esteemed, his attitude received the approbation of the authorities; and the newly created Lieutenant-Colonel was permitted to stay undisturbed at Timbuktu.

For only one year Joffre was in supreme command there; but this year marked the complete subjugation of Soudan and its development into a prosperous colony.

It is not enough to invade an enemy's country. Complete victory means the maintenance of conquered territory against all future attacks. "When advance becomes useless or impossible, an army must be able, no matter what the cost, to hold the conquered territory and die rather than retreat."

This memorable order of General Joffre issued to the French Army in 1914 shows but the ripened belief based on experience of the man who succeeded in making Timbuktu an impregnable fortress.

Timbuktu fell; Timbuktu was nominally in French hands; Timbuktu must become a

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French possession in reality, and Joffre began the work of bringing this about.

The battles over, he devoted himself to fortifying the French positions in Timbuktu proper, and at all strategic points in the neighbourhood. He constructed fortifications, built blockhouses, gradually extended his line of defences into the surrounding country. The engineer supplanted the soldier once more.

At the end of the year 1894, twenty years before his appointment to the supreme command of the French forces in the struggle that is to decide the future of Europe, Joffre was rewarded by being made an officer of the Legion of Honour. This mark of appreciation signalized the end of his labours in the Soudan. The country was pacified, the natives learned to respect the French soldiers as enemies, as they learned not to fear them as friends.

How did Joffre succeed in achieving this wonderful result? The answer is by method, knowledge, energy and justice.

A French officer, who lived a long time in English-speaking countries, characterized General Joffre's way of getting things done by saying: "He wants what he wants when he wants it, and he always knows what he wants and why he wants it."

It is not that Joffre has ever suppressed individual enterprise ; but individual enterprise, with him, must have its *raison d'être* in the general scheme of things. He has never tried to create a mere machine out of the men he commanded—the favourite plan of the German generals ; but he has ever insisted that an army, no matter how large or how small, must present a harmonious whole.

His work done, he received the order to return to France. This time he obeyed without a murmur. There was still much to be done ; but the most important part of it, the foundation, so to say, laid on solid ground and erected in a way to insure it against crumbling down, was accomplished.

Viewed retrospectively, these pages of General Joffre's biography form a brilliant record, for even then could be applied to him with justice the words of President Poincaré pronounced on the occasion of presenting him with the military medal after the battle on the Marne.

“ You have shown ”—said the President—
“ in the command of our armies, qualities which cannot be denied even for a brief moment : a power of organization, of order and of method, the beneficent effects of which can be witnessed in the strategy and the

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tactics : a cool and prescient wisdom that always knows how to meet the unexpected ; a force of soul that nothing can disturb ; a serene behaviour, the welcome effect of which is the planting of confidence and hope throughout the country."

When he came back to Paris, Joffre became accredited to the General Staff as Secretary to the Commission on Inventions.

He arrived at a time when the Dreyfus case seemed closed for ever. The unfortunate officer stood his trial, was degraded, condemned and sent to the Devil's Island. A superficial calm reigned in France. The guilty victim was punished, the cancerous growth of corruption that threatened the destruction of the army was apparently torn out by the roots. France breathed more easily.

Nothing shows better Joffre's adaptability than the fact that his efficiency was not marred in the least by his new appointment, so different from the form of activity he pursued in Africa.

CHAPTER X

“A PAIR OF SPECTACLES ”

“**A**NECDOTES of General Joffre while he served in the Soudan ? Those of us who took part in the campaign remember only his cool-headedness, his not needing any rest, his being ever ready and, consequently, proof against all surprises, and the fact that somehow or other, this silent man, I nearly used the word morose, succeeded in inspiring such confidence in himself that no one ever thought of questioning his orders,” said a grey-headed colonel, still on active service, under Joffre’s orders, to the author.

“ There were no anecdotes that one of us could remember—we all were too busy doing real work. One cannot help working when his chief sets the example ; one does his best when his chief will do the task all over again, without saying a word, should the work have failed to come up to the desired standard.”

But there is a story in existence, a story which, though lacking in dramatic accessories,

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thrills one with its revelation of the depth of the man's devotion to duty.

Look at a photograph of General Joffre and you will notice something strange about his left eye. A hazy veil seems to cover it. Do not ask the General the cause of it—he prefers it to remain unnoticed. But here is the true version of how he came to receive that injury.

His column was moving on Timbuktu. News had just reached him that Colonel Bonnier was slain in battle. Sleep was out of the question under the pressure of work—it was probably in the Soudan that General Joffre learned to do without sleep as he proved able to do during the early stages of this war—every ounce of energy was needed for the purpose in hand, when the young commander was stung in the left eye by a poisonous insect. Not that he desisted from his labours, but the doctor who accompanied the force noticed the inflammation, and, fearing serious results, ordered him to wear a bandage.

“But how can I direct my troops blindfolded?” protested Joffre.

“Well then, wear blue spectacles, as you may otherwise lose your eyesight under the glaring rays of the desert sun,” persisted the physician.

It is needless to say that the order to procure blue spectacles was impossible of execution. Another man would have declared in a tragic manner that he would rather lose his eyesight, than endanger his troops. Not so Joffre. He said nothing and continued to ignore the injury.

Who does not know the tortures of an inflamed eye ? Add to this the hardships of a march through a desert amidst constant attacks by the tribesmen, and General Joffre's sufferings can be imagined.

The big fight with the Touaregs was fought and won. Communication with the rear-guard was re-established. The soldiers began to receive their mails and packages. Among the latter was one addressed to the nephew of General Loyre by the uncle. General Loyre happened to be an acquaintance of Commandant Joffre, and as the nephew in question was invalided home because of illness, Joffre decided to open the package—it contained among other things a pair of blue spectacles.

These spectacles probably saved the General from total blindness ; but the mark remained for ever in the left eye as proof that he does not lack the heroism of physical self-sacrifice.

Life in Paris after the strenuous campaign

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in the Soudan formed a well-earned rest. His new duties gave him wide scope for keeping abreast of all the progress made in the field of armament and for enlarging his store of technical knowledge. Besides, forming part and parcel of the service of the General Staff, he could familiarize himself with all the details of the plans against a renewed German attack.

Singularly enough, although the Dreyfus case had for its birthplace the General Staff, General Joffre, whose insight and discernment must have made him thoroughly cognizant of all its phases, remained outside the path of the storm.

Very soon the Dreyfus affair was to become of world-wide concern ; very soon the taint of treachery to the nation was to besmirch some of France's greatest soldiers ; very soon the country was to be torn by a whirlwind of unloosed passions. Joffre remained calm as he remained silent.

For two years he pursued the peaceful avocations assigned to him, and not a word of his, concerning the then all-absorbing topic, is known to have been pronounced.

CHAPTER XI

HIS WORK IN MADAGASCAR

THERE is a curious coincidence in the fact that Joffre, the conqueror of the Soudan, returned to France after the end of the Dreyfus trial, and that he was to be chosen for another distant expedition just at the time when the case was to assume a much greater importance than before.

Senator Scheurer-Kestner was about to demand the revision of the sentence on Dreyfus, when Lieutenant-Colonel Joffre was entrusted with the task of creating a fortified naval base at Diégo-Suarez, Madagascar.

Madagascar, rich in minerals and in all sorts of raw material, had been in the past a source of unending trouble to France, who for centuries past had been bent upon establishing her sovereignty over the island on a firm foundation.

Discovered in the year 1500 by the Portuguese, Diégo Diaz, Madagascar remained practically unknown to Europeans save for tentative commercial relations maintained by

the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the French. In 1642 the latter made the first serious attempt to take the island under the protectorate of France by establishing, in the manner pursued by them in Canada, commercial outposts and erecting a village of more or less imposing size—the Fort Dauphin. They were compelled to abandon all these efforts in 1674; but in the course of the eighteenth century they renewed them several times, though with no better results. The early nineteenth century saw the French trying, in real earnest, to include Madagascar among their colonial possessions; but the resistance of the powerful tribe, named Hovas, who had grown strong by uniting all the smaller tribes under their rule, forced the French once more to abandon their project.

It was not until 1885 that the treaty placing the island under a French protectorate was signed; but the insurrection which broke out soon after left, after it was subdued, Madagascar a simple French colony in 1896.

General Galliéni, whose rôle in saving Paris from German occupation in the present war will entitle him to a pedestal of glory in the French Hall of Fame, was appointed Governor of Madagascar, and under his rule the island flourished and prospered until it became a

jewel of a colony in the truest sense of the word.

More than ten years later it became the duty of Joffre to complete the work by constructing a fortified naval base at Diégo-Suarez.

That Joffre should have been chosen for the task is not at all surprising. It meant devotion and singleness of purpose and, though the truth be bitter, there were few, if any, other Joffres in the French Army at the time.

Did Joffre himself welcome the new appointment? No doubt the existing conditions disgusted the soldier in him, but he said never a word—Joffre was and is a disciplinarian. Most probably he welcomed the opportunity to get away from the stifling atmosphere of army intrigues interwoven with scandals such as would revolt the honest soul of the Catalan to whom duty was life's supreme object.

There is no man in French public life to-day who is not known to have taken a prominent stand in the Dreyfus's affair, save Joffre. He must have formed an opinion; endowed by clear-sightedness and logical thinking, he must have reached a decision; but he kept silent, and the men, who kept the

pot of scandal boiling paid but little heed to the silent soldier who was, nevertheless, useful and efficient in performing hard and thankless tasks.

But among the men whose hearts were bleeding for the pitiful situation into which the army of France was brought, the name of Joffre began to signify a force for reconstruction, a future leader of undisputed character.

Nature never intended Joffre for political success—he has ever lacked the ability to shine in a personal way, no matter how brilliant his exploits ; and it was a kind act of Fate towards France that the problem of a naval base at Madagascar called him away from his country.

Lieutenant-Colonel Joffre, was made a full-fledged colonel, as he set out for Diégo-Suarez to return once more to engineering, leaving purely military achievements to others.

Little did any one suspect, Joffre probably least of all, that Madagascar was to close the first chapter in his career, and that his subsequent return to France was to mark the beginning of an epoch which inevitably led towards the culminating-point—the command of France's Army in the greatest struggle known to mankind.

The fortified base at Diégo-Suarez is still looked upon as a model of construction of its kind. This in itself would have been sufficient to cover Colonel Joffre with glory ; but the achievement looms still greater when the difficulties under which the work had to proceed are known.

There is one quality in General Joffre that is noticed the moment one is associated in doing work with him. This quality consists in never being content with the formulation of plans and the issuing of orders with the injunction that they must be implicitly obeyed. General Joffre sets the example—his subordinates must of necessity follow his lead—in lending his personal endeavours to the carrying out of what his mind has conceived.

The difficulties he was doomed to encounter presented themselves the moment he set foot on the shores of Madagascar.

Now that General Joffre has become the cynosure of the whole world, men who worked by his side in former years begin to recollect that never for an instant have they known of his having been perplexed or angry, under the most difficult and exasperating conditions.

The sickroom scene, when Joffre early in

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his career sought to prove to himself whether or not the physician's verdict that he was to lose his capacity for great mental effort was justified, shows clearly both the dogged determination to eliminate all doubt and the sublime fearlessness to face consciously a death-dealing blow.

Perplexity has no place in the composition of a man who has mastered method and is a model of calm judgment. Anger would have meant dissipation of energy, and this has ever been a stranger to the "Silent man of Rivesaltes."

But both perplexity and anger would have been fully justified by the aspect of affairs at the time when Colonel Joffre arrived in Madagascar.

Conditions could be best described by the word chaotic ; for once more it must be remembered that efficiency was lacking then in the organization of the French Army, and army contractors, so frequently described as the curse and the pest of an army, were as insolent as dishonest, thanks to the regime of political preferment.

No mental portrait can be drawn of a man unless the background is presented at the same time, and no proper estimate of General Joffre's work can be had unless the

elements unfavourable to success should be included in the view.

There are many great engineers ; there are many men possessing superior military knowledge ; but there is but one Joffre, and probably, Joffre would not be Joffre had not the obstacles helped to mould the man.

If the Soudan expedition possessed all the elements of a picturesque venture, the Madagascar appointment had all the characteristics of a prosaic task beset with many difficulties caused by nature and many others that were the work of man.

Joffre's advent into Diégo-Suarez was of itself of a discouraging character.

No sooner did he land than he was plunged into the midst of a problem, which unimportant in itself, could be looked upon as a true indication of what he was to face in the future when his work would begin in earnest.

Barracks had to be erected. The material arrived from France in such a condition of disorder and decay that it did not seem possible to disentangle it. Men and officers, alike, looked with despair upon the unloaded mass, raised their hands to heaven, uttered unspeakable words, and then retired to curse the men responsible. Some advised a demand for another boatload of material ; but

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others, grown wise through experience, declared that this would have only meant two mountains of debris instead of one.

It was a desolate and discouraging state of affairs. But Colonel Joffre arrived, and lo ! —the picture changed at once.

“ If men were responsible for creating this disorder, it is easy to suppose that men can restore the needed order,” was his reply to the report he heard.

He went, he saw, he began to give orders, never losing his sang-froid, never uttering a complaint against those men in France who caused him this extra labour and concern. The barracks had to be built, and in the reasoning of Joffre, there was nothing else to do but to build them with the smallest loss of time.

What was lacking, or could not be found, was improvised ; everybody was working feverishly, driven by the coolness of their leader and by his unflagging energy.

It was not long before the barracks were ready, and only a short time ago one of the officers, who participated in the work, said : “ We never expected to see them finished and many of us have not as yet recovered from the surprise.”

What did Joffre accomplish at Diégo-

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Suarez ? He found it a natural port of first class capabilities. To-day Diégo-Suarez is a Gibraltar of strength from a naval point of view, and its natural facilities have been increased a hundred-fold.

Experts have declared that his work there fully deserves the epithet of remarkable. His immediate superiors heaped praise upon him. The heads of the army expressed their pleasure both at the work itself and at the quick and efficient manner in which it was conducted.

CHAPTER XII

JOFFRE—THE MAN

DIEGO-SUAREZ is General Joffre's monument. An engineering marvel, it will live to perpetuate his fame as an engineer !

But in France, save at his home in humble Rivesaltes, little was known of the man.

It must be admitted that the Joffre of that day, lacking as he did his present aureole of the Saviour of his country, failed to make any personal impression.

If the greatness of a man be measured by the magnetic influence he exercises on all those who surround him, Colonel Joffre could not be classed among the great men of the earth.

It required the war of 1914 to prove that the day of personal magnetism as an asset in winning battles has gone. You cannot make a trench run by waving your sabre ; but you can take it by inspiring your men with confidence that it can be done.

General Joffre has always inspired confi-

dence in those who obeyed his orders. They have all instinctively felt that to follow him can mean but one thing—the surest and shortest way of arriving at the desired object.

No one thrilled at his approach with the enthusiasm of blind devotion. No one proclaimed himself to be ready to follow him unto the very jaws of death. He could make his men obey and respect him ; he could not, and apparently he never cared to, make them love him as Napoleon's guardsmen, for instance, loved the " Little Emperor."

That is probably why his name and popularity remained strangers for so long a time. On the other hand, it must be remembered that Joffre, from the earliest days of his military activity, has been guided by the principle that precaution is superior to dash, that scientific certainty is of more value than mere enthusiasm, and that such reasoning can hardly serve to kindle the fires of enthusiasm.

Although he himself could hammer away at a problem, asking and needing no rest until it was rightly solved, towards his subordinates he was, to use an Americanism, an " easy boss."

Once more it is worth repeating that many

of the results he achieved were due to his instinctive knowledge of how to employ human labour to the best advantage.

It is said that an American steel magnate declared of Lord Kitchener: "What a great president the steel trust lost in him!" It was a raw tribute to Lord Kitchener's organizing ability. General Joffre is not only an organizer, he is a wise employer of human force besides, so wise indeed that colossal undertakings become easy tasks under his guidance.

"There goes old System," an officer is said to have exclaimed in pointing to the passing Colonel, as the latter was on the way to inspect some work.

His hearers laughed; but what they laughed at has become the great power that succeeded in checking and beating back the over-powering German avalanche rushing to bury France midst the terror of death and ruin.

And all the time that Colonel Joffre was building a fortress in Madagascar to the glory of France, other men were busy trampling into dust that same glory.

Esterhazy was tried and acquitted. Colonel Picquart denounced the system that permitted traitors to be present in the highest

councils of the army. Emile Zola launched his famous "j'accuse!" France was once more in a turmoil, when Colonel Joffre came home.

If the hero of Timbuktu passed unnoticed, what reason was there for popular acclaim for the mere army engineer, successful though he might have been. And what cared France at the moment for the fact that everything was well at Madagascar when she was bleeding to death, said her enemies, from an internal wound?

General Joffre took no sides, at least not publicly, in the Dreyfus scandal. He was not strong enough to impose his views; and, in any case, there is no reason to think that he was permitted to know anything of the inner intrigues more than any ordinary spectator.

What of his private life? As almost always, it was a sealed book save on his periodical visits to his native Rivesaltes.

He had some friends, but to be a friend of General Joffre means above everything else to keep this friendship well hidden from public curiosity. He went occasionally to a theatre, but very occasionally, for the drama of life interested him too much to permit him to become absorbed in the drama

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of the stage. But he read and studied, studied and read, both at work and at rest, with music for his chief amusement.

Few are the men in Paris whom scandal, whether justly or not, has not touched at one time or another. General Joffre is one of the few.

No enemy has yet come forth to breathe a suspicion against him. No betraying friend has found within a niche of memory anything that could be hurled against him in an effort to stain his character. Just as no jealous competitor for honours has dared to deny that whatever General Joffre's place is to-day it has been fully merited.

The mystery that surrounds his private life has never been the result of the need of hiding a skeleton. Joffre is and ever has been a self-sufficient man. Some there are who apply to him the word "bear"; but this is far from the truth. "Our Joffre" has spent a busy life—he never had the time to learn the art of practising folly, and, having never learned it, has never had any need of it.

Neither has Joffre ever been a seeker after favours. The salons of the mighty, the drawing-rooms of the rich knew him not. He is a true example of the self-made man in

a profession where there is small chance of arriving at greatness without the opportunity of a war.

As he has never played at being a favourite, so he has never had favourites of his own. Those who know and love him, also know and love this trait of his—he abhors having anybody recommended to him. At once his brow becomes beclouded, his face grows hard.

“Haven’t I won unaided my success?” he replied once in answer to a “recommendation.” “What have I needed but work, application, and energy?”

Ability? It is a pass-word with him. Energy? It receives a warm welcome from him. An exacting master, he has never withheld his approval of work well done, and his appreciation has taken the form of acts, though not of words—of these latter he is sparing in the extreme.

“Well, is your son a general already?” continued to ask in good-natured banter Gilles Joffre’s Rivesaltes neighbours; and the grey father smiled as he answered with pride:

“Not yet, but he is a colonel.” And in the appellation “the colonel’s father” he almost lost his own identity.

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But one day, it was in 1901, Rivesaltes welcomed home Joffre, grown to be a real general. The father's dream, his ardent wish, his conception of final happiness came true—he was the father of a general.

CHAPTER XIII

TIDAL WAVE OF PROMOTION

IT was on October 12, 1901, that Joffre was made general. The date marks the beginning of an epoch that may be rightly described as the epoch of Joffre's preparation for the gigantic struggle France has had to face in 1914.

At first he commanded the Second Army Brigade ; two years later he is seen as member of the Technical Committee at the Ministry of War, and one year later as the head of this branch of the service.

He was undoubtedly making progress in his career ; but still his name was an enigma not only to the public at large, but even to the army, though his work was making itself felt, and not a few of his colleagues began to look upon him as a coming man.

"When I look back, I somehow or other cannot discover a difference between the personality of Commandant Joffre and that of General Joffre," said one of the rare men who have the right to call themselves the

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General's intimates. "His grade changed, but he has ever remained the same. Promotion pleased him, it never spurred him on. He never ceased to study, for he could never bring himself to believe that one could exhaust the possibilities of any subject. His manner, too, never changed. To-day, the *Généralissime* of the French Army is as simple, as unpretentious, as eager for knowledge as he was when, as captain, he began his life-work. His achievements may awe others; he himself regards them as being all in a day's work. Honours gratify him, he would not be human were it otherwise; but he would not sacrifice a single principle for the sake of them. He loves his country and will give his life in serving it; but he would not impose himself upon it. That is why we know that he fully meant his words, pronounced but a few months ago, that he looked forward eagerly to a rest, after victory had been won, a rest that would include retirement from active life."

But in 1904 retirement was not even considered by General Joffre. There was work to be done, plenty of it; there was great need of his organizing ability; there was an urgent call for the introduction of method into the army service.

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General Joffre gave the best that was in him, as he always did ; but if it took thirteen years for the captain to win the fourth stripe that signifies the commandant's rank, it took but four years for the brigade general to become the commander of a division.

The year 1905 saw two events in his life. On March 24 of that year he was made a division general. On April 26 he married for the second time.

Artillery general in 1901 ; infantry general in 1905, Joffre found himself in a congenial sphere everywhere, and everywhere he went he built, he constructed, he changed things for the better, and in the souls of all whom he commanded he implanted confidence.

No higher compliment could be paid to an officer than the one contained in the words of a sergeant who served under Joffre in Formosa, and who was one of those who remembered the "man who never spoke," as Joffre was named in a spirit of exaggeration.

"When Joffre is in command," he said on learning of the General's appointment to be the absolute head of the French Army, "there is no need of worry. Success is assured. That man Joffre is a veritable wolf-trap for the enemy."

In the crude way of the unlettered man,

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the sergeant expressed the exact valuation of General Joffre. He knows how to trap the enemy, he spent his life in acquiring this knowledge, he learned how to use it, and, since August 1914, he has repeatedly used it, thus fully justifying the confidence placed in him by the nation.

In times of peace, the soldier's life does not abound in interesting episodes. In the calm that reigned in France after the uproar of the Dreyfus affair, the inner life and routine of the army became firmly shut off from the public gaze.

Everybody knew that great reforms were being introduced; that every effort to give to France a fighting force worthy of her traditions was being made, and that there was no reason to fear that the "enemy," as Germany has been known since 1870, would find the country unprepared. But save for the yearly reviews at Longchamps and Vincennes, the army was a closed book.

Under such conditions it was but natural that the man, who did not stir popular imagination by the capture of Timbuktu, should remain more than ever in the shadows of obscurity. Despite the important work he was doing, General Joffre was little known beyond official and family circles.

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He was a member of numerous Commissions that were investigating important military changes ; but such changes are brought about in secret and not to the sound of trumpets. Besides he was not an orating general, and the man in the street had no opportunity of commenting upon his words or deeds because Joffre's name was rarely brought to his attention.

There is little to note in this stage of his development before he became the great chief of the French Army except the dates that indicate the variety and number of his activities.

At one time he commanded the military district of Lille ; in 1909 he was at the head of the Second Army Corps stationed at Amiens. He had thus a good opportunity of studying that part of France which is now so important a field in the vital struggle in the West.

In 1910 he was made Chief Inspector of Military Schools and was at the same time called to the High War Council (Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre) as the French General Staff's ruling body is designated.

He was but fifty-eight years old. His rapid strides in the last part of his career not only fully made up the loss of time in its early

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stages, but carried him forward on a veritable tidal wave of promotion.

Honours have never brought rest with them to Joffre. Every step in his advancement meant greater activity to him. But every such step seemed to rejuvenate him ; he found new strength at every sound of duty's call.

CHAPTER XIV

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

WHEN in 1911 it was decided to abolish the dual power in the army and to concentrate the duties of the Chief of the General Staff, who was charged with war preparations, and those of the Vice-President of the War Council, who was to conduct the war as the head of the army, in the hands of one man, General Joffre was chosen for the post.

It was at the height of the Morocco trouble, practically at the moment of the "coup d'Agadir," when the political horizon was covered with dark clouds, when it seemed impossible that peace could be preserved, when a struggle between France and Germany was thought to be inevitable, that General Joffre assumed the supreme command of the French Army.

The public wonderingly inquired who was the man who thus practically held in his hands the future of France ; some recollected Timbuktu ; others remembered having seen

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his name in the Army Bulletin ; none knew why he was chosen.

But those who placed upon General Joffre's shoulders the responsibility for the future welfare of the nation, knew well the reasons for their actions.

It was M. Caillaux, then Prime Minister, and M. Messimy, Secretary of War at the time, who brought to President Fallières for his signature the decree that was to make General Joffre head of the French Army. But the choice of General Joffre was made on the unanimous advice of the War Council, and what is more, his name was proposed by General Pau, who was the first choice of the War Council and, for that matter, of the entire French Army ; but who, in a spirit of noble sacrifice, renounced the honour and yielded the place to General Joffre.

The greatest military gift the French nation could offer to one of its sons was in the possession of Joffre ; but not by any exterior sign did he show that he had grown to be any different from the Joffre of other days.

"By his simplicity, by his modesty, he recalls to mind the great chieftains of Rome, at a time when the Republic was at the apogee of virile splendour," was a recent

estimate of General Joffre, and the estimate is more than true.

A task of stupefying proportions was assigned to the General. He was to prepare for war, he was to mould an army, he was to find ways and means for a successful fight against the Prussian military machine, he was to be responsible for defeat, he alone was to bear the brunt of failure.

Unflinchingly he accepted the duty, and sternly set himself to the task of fulfilling his mission.

What Joffre did, what he accomplished, was shown in the first days of the mobilisation ; but his greatest achievement was his clear view into the future, his ability to discern the character the coming war was to assume.

One year after becoming the First War Lord of France, were such a term known in his country, General Joffre pronounced, in an interview, these historic words :

“ It will not be the commanding generals who will gain the battles of the future. It will be the colonels and even the simple captains. The fighting front will extend from 400 or 500 miles, and, under such conditions, the will of one man cannot be made felt everywhere, for there is but little

opportunity for new combinations and ruses. The rôle of the commanding general will nearly come to an end the moment he will have gathered at a desired point in the line of battle all the forces that are needed ; the rôle of the colonels and of the captains will begin with the first shots fired. They it will be who will decide the result of the struggle. The troops that will win will be those that will hold out the longest, that will prove superior in endurance, in energy, and in faith in the final victory."

Prophetic though they sound, these words were more than prophecy, they were the positive statement of positive facts, gathered through study and work, of indisputable conclusions arrived at through experience supplemented by science.

"Nothing is improvised when at war," he declared on another occasion, and this can be taken as the key of all his activity during the period he has been in supreme command of the French Army.

General Joffre probes to the very bottom of things ; his lucid mind does not tolerate half certainties nor admit any illusions. Others may trust to chance ; he places his faith in thorough preparation. No superficial judgment for him. To judge means to

General Joffre to learn ; and to learn means to know.

When sent on a special mission a few years ago, for the purpose of studying Russia's military organization, he pursued his inquiries in such a methodical way, with so much care for detail, with such practical intelligence and breadth of view, as to win warm admiration on the part of the Russian military authorities.

"What I like about your *Généralissime*" —declared Tsar Nicholas to M. Delcassé, then French Ambassador at Petrograd—"is that he speaks little and prefers not to speak when he has nothing to say."

What France likes about her leader is that he prefers actions to words, and that in him lives not only the hope of the nation, but its most ardent desire—victory !

General Joffre in the eyes of France is the centrifugal force that drives all her powers towards a victorious end.

"This is nothing," he said on being congratulated on having been decorated with the military medal, "this is nothing. Everything is nothing save victory. The only thing that counts is the final success."

And for four years he devoted every nerve, every thought, every ounce of his

ability and of his strength to this final success.

Sparing of words, General Joffre has not written either. He has been too busy preparing himself, though probably unconsciously, for the final test. He had to learn, he had no time to expound theories.

To measure the grandeur of his conception and the reach of his vision there is nothing to be had only the results he achieved. But there is published a speech he delivered in 1913 before the Society of former pupils of the Polytechnic, and, in view of the events that have come to pass since, it is interesting to recall some of the passages.

He did not give his views on strategy in war ; he did not explain his ideas upon the conduct of battles ; but he talked of the new conditions in which modern conflicts must be brought to an issue, and he announced what has since become nearly a truism, that war to-day means a war of nations, and not of quarrelling princes, and that, consequently, the responsibility for defeat would henceforth fall upon the nation itself.

It was not only a soldierly discourse, it was one that showed to what scholarly attainments the General has reached in the course of his busy life. He cited Ovid, Bossuet,

Montesquieu. He gave a brilliant outline of France's colonial policy. He passed in review all the factors that are of importance to the defence of national honour, factors material, intellectual, and moral ; the army, the armament, the generals, and the patriotic valour of France. He gave the keynote of his work as the head of the French Army, and this keynote was contained in the words—" We must be prepared ! "

" With the means of fighting the world possesses at present "—he declared—" with whole nations engaged in a mortal combat, disaster is certain for those who in time of peace failed to prepare for war."

What means " being ready " in these days of advanced military science ? General Joffre gives a ready reply.

" To be ready in our times has a significance of which those who prepared and led the wars of other days could have hardly had a comprehension "—he said—" To be ready means to-day to have mustered, in advance, all the resources of the country, all the intelligence of its children, all their moral energy for the purpose of attaining but this one aim—victory.

" Getting ready is a duty that devolves not only upon the army, but upon all public

officials, upon all organizations, upon all societies, upon all families, upon all citizens. Each and all must take part in preparing the national defence. No individual or collective act is without importance. This defence grows stronger through the invention of a genius as much as through the efforts of a simple labourer, and every failure to co-operate makes it weaker in the same ratio.

“The strength, the power, the security of a country are interwoven with its prosperity and with that of its children.”

And once again he sounded the solemn warning : “We must be ready !”

Having uttered this warning he set himself with redoubled efforts towards making France ready to face the ever threatening foe.

CHAPTER XV

PREPARING FOR WAR

GENERAL JOFFRE is conscious of realities. Others may dream of fundamental changes ; but he has ever feared experiments when the stakes meant national honour. He went ahead in perfecting the fighting machine of France ; but in organizing the army, he has ever endeavoured to organize the nation at the same time for, warrior though he has been all his life, no one knows better the value of spiritual ascendancy.

“The material organization of the army, perfect though it may be ; its understanding no matter how highly developed, will be insufficient to ensure us a victory, if this army, strong and intelligent as it may have become, will lack a soul,” he declared.

He knew then, as he knows to-day, that it is the soul of a people that guides the world's destinies, and who will gainsay that he has not helped to awaken France's soul ?

Only a comparatively short time before the

war he delivered the other great speech of his life when he fought before the Chamber of Deputies for the so-called "Three Years Law," the Bill that was to extend the time of military service to three years.

Together with General Pau he was chosen by the Government to aid the passage of this Law, and for days he listened calm and unperturbed, to abuse and calumnies heaped by the Radicals upon the men at the head of France's military affairs. For three long months, day in and day out, he heard his work belittled, he witnessed the fury of vituperation trying to drag his associates into the mire. He faced this all as stolidly as he faced the dangers on his march on Timbuktu or the difficulties of the problems he encountered in his work.

Finally a day came when General Pau, unable to contain his anger and not permitted to answer to the calumnies, rose from his seat and left the Chamber amidst the angry shouts of the opponents of the Bill, who saw in his action a demonstrative protest against parliamentarism. General Joffre remained seated.

Not a word escaped his tightly shut mouth, not a gesture came to break his impassive attitude, only the fire in the eyes beneath the

heavy eyebrows betrayed the emotion he felt.

When he came to speak he spoke with the cool reasoning of an instructor, and he won the day, for the Bill became law.

It would really seem as if some of these stoical qualities of General Joffre have passed into the souls of the soldiers he commands, for the "furia Francese," as the Italians styled the bravado of the French troops of former days, has developed into a heroism that lacks the picturesque, but does not recognize obstacles nor permit anything to obscure the path to the goal.

"The primordial virtue of a general commanding an army is his character," was Napoleon's dictum.

General Joffre is a man of character, and this force of his has been felt throughout the ranks of the French Army until every soldier in the trenches, every trooper in the field owns as part and parcel of his moral equipment some of this precious gift.

He is the idol of the army, and he has become such in spite of his being one of the strictest disciplinarians ever known.

"It is not because he spoils us that we call him 'our Joffre,'" said a soldier who has fought with him from the first moment of the war.

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“ It is because he belongs to us, because he is always near us, because he is what we want him to be, because after having read an order of his, no matter how great a restriction it may bring, one is bound to exclaim : ‘ By Jove ! he is right after all ! ’ ”

If one were to make a minute search for the dominant trait of his character, the discovery would probably be made that it consists in the perfect mental equilibrium he possesses. Born a Catholic, a Republican of firm persuasion, a freemason of wide repute, creeds and opinions have never succeeded in making him give or receive favours. Many are the heads that fell into the official basket under the blow of Joffre’s axe, whose possessors ardently shared his political beliefs, and the claims of friendship have never yet been placed by him before what he conceived to be the interests of his country.

Nothing is more foreign to his character than presumption. He is eager for opinions, he listens to advice, and no decision of his is irrevocable. He believes in the ancient adage : “ Errare humanum est,” and he leaves to the Germans the doubtful right of claiming the qualities of supermen.

He does not lack faith in himself, but neither does he suffer from over-confidence.

All his life has been spent in learning, and he is still willing and eager to learn.

“A well balanced mind, a well balanced soul,” is the verdict pronounced upon Joffre by one of France’s most eminent thinkers.

There is but one characteristic which is perhaps excessively evident. It is his taciturnity ; but even this is due partly to his capacity of immense concentration upon his work and partly to his innate modesty, and this modesty is also probably the explanation and the cause of his apparent coldness, so little in accord with the spirit of his native province.

But the poverty of spoken words does not denote the absence of thought, any more than his equilibrium results from an insufficiency of ardour in a conflict.

Tenacious of purpose ; daring when audacity seems to be a necessity ; defiant because certain of himself and his men, and withal almost timid. This is General Joffre. He has never suffered from jealousy, and so he has never tried to diminish great qualities in others. He is surrounded by men of great ability, and he has never been guilty of an endeavour to overshadow them, and if he does overshadow them nevertheless, it is only because he is *the* great man.

CHAPTER XVI

"JOFFRE, THE TACITURN"

FUTURE military critics will discuss and decide the question whether or not France was ready to meet the foe when Berlin threw down the gauntlet into the world's arena ; future investigators will place the fault upon the shoulders of those who were responsible for any lack of readiness ; but all will have to admit that, within the limited powers of man, General Joffre performed true miracles with the material he had in hand.

"The battle is before and everything else a conflict of moral forces," was a dictum of Napoleon, and Joffre seems to have been able to make out of this phrase a living emblem, a source of inspiration and endurance, an indestructible armament for his men.

It was their superior moral force that enabled the French armies to hold back, and then to hurl back, the much greater and stronger armies of the Kaiser. It was moral force that made the French soldier overcome

and laugh at insurmountable difficulties. It was moral force that welded the French nation into one compound mass of energy and patriotism.

The very exterior of General Joffre bespeaks the man. He is of rather large stature. His wide chest is surmounted by a large head. The face is broad, and the heavy eyebrows serve to accentuate its character. A strong jaw, beneath a heavy moustache, does not add to the mobility of the features. Strength is the chief characteristic of his face, and only the eyes, blue, brilliant, clear with a penetrating gaze and an expression which is more soft than severe, reflect the soul of purity and the heart of gold of the General.

To see him placid and calm, well planted on his legs, emanating assurance, one begins to understand why “ Papa Joffre ” has come to be a favourite nickname with soldiers.

There is something paternal in his figure, in his pose, in his glance. There is something paternal in the impression one receives from looking at his face, the face of a man both happy and healthy, for neither illness, nor ambition, nor passion, nor anger have left their imprint there. One begins to

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understand why the soldiers look to Joffre as the little boy does to his father.

Patience is the foundation of the General's will-power, its moving force is his conscience, which makes him disregard the world's vanities, which makes him place duty above everything else, which makes him seek reward in the performance of the task and not in the honours that may be heaped upon him. Add to this the free use of common sense, and it is easily seen why he has never sought to astonish, why he has ever been the watchful, the careful, the humane leader of men.

Truly it may be said that he is a commander who knows no hatred, no passionate anger, and who is thus free from self-reproach.

Many were the visits to his headquarters described by eager and enthusiastic scribes. Pages of eulogy were written about him and his achievements. As yet no one has succeeded in obtaining an interview from him—for he hates to make himself the centre of public attention and he abhors publicity.

He spoke and he ~~will~~ speak in that serious voice of his, in that slow manner of his, every word seemingly carefully weighed before being pronounced, every phrase simple, clear, and void of any attempt at oratory ; but

search as one may, the personal element, that really makes an interview, is ever absent.

Whenever he uttered anything it was for the single purpose of emphasizing anew the fact that victory when it comes will belong to the whole French nation ; whenever he spoke, he declared that success was due to the undaunted spirit of the French soldier. As to himself, he looks upon himself as only the lever that puts in motion a machinery, every cog of which must be in perfect co-ordination if good results are to be achieved.

Call it modesty, call it unresponsiveness to popular clamour, the fact remains that when “ Joffre, the Taciturn ” breaks his silence, it is never to waste words in self-praise, and France loves him the better for it.

CHAPTER XVII

AT JOFFRE'S HEADQUARTERS

CIRCUMSTANCES bring with them the man. Joffre, in the days of picturesque, theatrical warfare, would have been probably out of place ; but in these days, when the automobile has replaced the galloping horse, when the sword is left to rust in some corner, when the golden epaulets and the tinsel of other days have disappeared together with comic opera uniforms, white capes and bearskin busbies, Joffre is rightly the genius incarnate of the army he commands.

A modern army chief resembles much more the directing head of a giant industry than the battlefield general of our imagination. General Joffre is a great leader because warfare has developed into a struggle of brains, plus engineering skill, plus organizing ability.

At the great battle of Borodino Napoleon could easily survey the whole front from a neighbouring hill. Nearly a million men were engaged in that memorable battle beneath the

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very walls of Moscow, and still the battle-front was well within the horizon of a human eye. Napoleon could ride from one wing to the other, encouraging and directing, changing plans and making new adjustments.

Seated in a little room, surrounded with maps, General Joffre must think out all his plans to the minutest detail, probably days in advance of the actual struggle, for when the latter comes, there is no room and no time for changes.

Inspiration at the last moment saved many a day for Napoleon. Such inspiration to-day could not prevent disaster, it would probably but hasten it. Joffre places his faith in other things than inspiration at the eleventh hour. He knows beforehand what is going to happen, and takes his measures to ensure success.

Time will show the difficulties General Joffre had to overcome, for brains alone cannot win wars. Cannons and soldiers, horses and ammunitions are more than essential. Despite Joffre's repeated warnings, France was not ready when Germany's cohorts began their march through Belgium. History will name the guilty, as history will crown Joffre a true miracle worker.

Should the impossible happen and defeat

crush the French Army, future generations would have to admit that, whoever's fault caused the disaster, General Joffre was blameless.

Were you fortunate enough to have been admitted to General Joffre's presence at his army headquarters, you would have probably found him in a small room, surrounded by telephones and maps. The constant sound of rushing motor-cars ; the ceaseless coming and going of staff-officers ; the arrival and dispatch of telegrams ; the hearing of reports, frequently contradictory in the extreme, form the atmosphere that surrounds him.

He alone would not appear to you to be hurried as he issued orders or dictated instructions—hurry would be a sign of indecision, and General Joffre never gives an order before his decision has been fully made.

Some day these orders of General Joffre will be issued in book form for the guidance of generals of generations to come.

He orders what aim is to be pursued, he leaves the choice of means to the immediate commanders of the divisions or brigades. He never stifles initiative, he never tries to prevent any one from having an opportunity of winning the laurel wreath of victory. An

impartial judge, he is as ready with reward as with punishment ; but he exacts quick brains and firm hands from those who would serve under him.

At midnight you would find him working still, as you would probably find him two hours later. Then you would see him throw himself upon the narrow iron cot, boots and all, and when the morning sun would come out from below the horizon to signal the coming of another day, it would discover the General already at his work.

A silent man, if you please, but has there ever been an eloquence so powerful as his silence ?

A loving husband, a tender father, General Joffre has kept away from his family from the moment the first shot was fired in this war. He did so because he ordered that no woman must come near his soldiers' camps, and he would have been untrue to himself had he not set the first example.

" He has ever set the example, and he has never shirked his duty," would be a fair summary of the reasons why he has become " Our Joffre " from the moment he has assumed the high command of the French Army.

Kings have paid their homage to him,

nations have glorified him, great soldiers have bowed before his leadership, but he has remained the simple man, the son of an honest Pyrenean, and when the war will be over, he will probably hasten to his native Rivesaltes and forget the hardships of the war over a game of manille, while the world will still sing his praises and repeat Lord Kitchener's words : " He is a great man."

No biographical sketch of General Joffre would be complete without a few words about his home life.

In days of peace General Joffre is the man of the home in the truest sense of the word. It is but seldom that he leaves his fireside once the day's labours are over, and the Roman adage "*Mens sana in corpore sano*" has never had a more ardent disciple than him.

Early to bed and early to rise has been his iron rule when at home. Of an evening he loves to listen to his wife playing his favourite melodies on the piano ; he plays and chats with his two little daughters ; he sings sometimes, for he knows the classic repertoire and he appreciates good music ; sometimes a friend comes in for a talk ; but not a day passes on which before retiring for the night he does not spend some time in his magnifi-

cent library, for he is a true lover of books and a never tiring seeker after knowledge.

Every morning at six o'clock he can be seen riding a horse in the Bois de Boulogne. Sometimes he is alone ; sometimes his little daughters accompany him. Seldom have Parisians recognized him in the past, and he has never sought their recognition.

General Joffre's simplicity of manner is fully equalled by the simplicity of his home life, for the glamour of society has never attracted him and the pleasures of the masses stir no emotion within him.

A life full of busy interest, of active work, of serious intention and of patriotic devotion ; a man of honest purpose, of constant pursuit, of unfailing energy, of deep thought and of great learning ; a leader of sterling qualities, a general of genius, a soldier without fear or reproach—this is General Joffre, his life and himself.

One hundred years have passed from Napoleon till Joffre. A century separates these two men. Both mark the culminating-points of France's glory. But one conquered to bring ruin to his country ; the other will conquer to prevent ruin from ever menacing his country again.

CHAPTER XVIII

SOME ANECDOTES

IT will have been gathered from the foregoing chapters that General Joffre, like our own Lord Roberts, did not understand the art of self-advertisement. He had, indeed, a perfect horror of publicity. Some time after he was entrusted with special missions to Senegal and Timbuktu, he wrote an account of the expeditions without once mentioning himself.

Of his private life so little is known that a French lady, who recently delivered a lecture on the General's career, had to confess that she did not know the maiden name of Madame Joffre. There is, indeed, no hostess in Paris who can boast that she ever entertained the General. He never wished to pose as a social lion. From such small and unpretentious functions as he would allow himself to attend, he always departed early, so that he might be fresh for the next day's duties.

His exercise was limited to a morning ride in the Bois, and a three-mile walk from his

office to his home. He has always been extremely abstemious in his habits, smoking little and drinking less. As a conversationalist he is awkward and abrupt, not because he has nothing to say, but from a sheer disinclination to seem to be thrusting himself forward.

Of such a man anecdotes are necessarily rare, but one or two stories are told which illustrate, to some extent, the reticence of the man, and the comparative obscurity from which the war has drawn him.

After the war of 1870 he was entrusted to organize the new defences of Paris, and it was on his plans, and under his direction, that the fortifications at Enghien were erected. It was on the ramparts of one of these forts that Marshal MacMahon, surrounded by his staff, called a young lieutenant, who had not spoken a word, and said to him, "I congratulate you, captain!" "Captain at twenty years! That is good." To congratulate the young officer thus openly and personally was not strict military etiquette. "How could I help it?" said the Marshal afterwards. "My heart went out to the young fellow."

Joffre was sent East to organize the defensive works of Pontarlier. "It is all very nice," he said to a friend, "but I know more

than making fortifications. I should wish to be given the command of troops."

Dr. Pujade, ex-deputy of the Pyrénées-Orientales, relates how he was at Dresden in 1911 at the time of the incident at Agadir. "The Parliamentary delegates of which I was one," he said, "had been officially invited to a grand dinner by the mayor of the Saxon capital. The gravity of the international position naturally checked the flow of genial conversation, and during the dinner conversation was strictly formal.

"Towards the close, however, the German tongues were unloosed. In the smoking-room the President of the Exhibition of Hygiene of Dresden, who thought, no doubt, that I might be more talkative than my colleague, said bluntly, 'What do you think of the situation in France'?

"I did not reply, and he repeated the question. I still kept silent. The German then became angry. 'Yes,' he said, 'I know well that a French soldier is worth two German soldiers, but you have neither discipline nor generals.' 'We have no discipline,' I replied. 'You are right. We have not your discipline. We have replaced it by the love of the officers for their soldiers, and by the love of the soldiers for their officers,

thanks to which our officers would be able to make their soldiers pass through the eye of a needle. We have no generals? All right! And you? Who have you? And what proofs have they given? As a matter of fact, of all our French generals I only know one, but I know him well. That is the Commander-in-Chief, General Joffre. I advise you not to meddle with him.' "

Of the General's strictly methodical habits the following story is told.

During the retreat from Mons a staff officer arrived at headquarters with a very urgent dispatch after the Commander-in-Chief had retired for the night. Joffre had given instructions that he was not to be disturbed before 5 A.M., and that directions would be found for any emergency in certain marked envelopes. These were opened and the solution found for the difficulty that had arisen, which he had foreseen and prepared for.

There was some discontent in France at General Joffre's order that no wives or sweet-hearts were to be allowed to visit men on active service. "Women have nothing to do with the Army," he said, "I fear them as much as I fear intoxicating liquor." But he imposed the same stern sacrifice

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on himself. During the first five months of the war, Mme. Joffre never saw her husband, and even now she only obtains a glimpse of him on his rare and brief visits to Paris.

GENERAL JOFFRE'S FAMOUS ORDER

ISSUED ON *September 6, 1914*

SOLDIERS,

At the moment when a battle, on which the salvation of your country may depend, is about to begin, you must remember that this is not the time for retrospective glances, for all the efforts must be employed to attack. An army that cannot advance must, no matter what the cost, maintain the territory won and die rather than retreat.

Signed : JOFFRE

SPEECH OF PRESIDENT POINCARÉ
WHEN PRESENTING GENERAL
JOFFRE WITH THE MILITARY
MEDAL

MY DEAR GENERAL,

I have great pleasure in presenting you to-day in the presence of the Presidents of the Chamber, the President of the Council, and the Secretary of War, with this simple and glorious medal which is the emblem of the highest military achievement, and which is proudly worn by illustrious generals and modest soldiers alike.

This symbolic distinction is but a proof of the nation's gratitude.

Since the day, when, under your direction, the concentration of the French forces was so remarkably executed, you have shown in the command of our armies qualities which cannot be denied : a spirit of organization, of order, and of method the beneficial effects of which are felt in the strategy as well as in the tactics ; a cool and discreet wisdom, which always knows how to meet the unexpected ;

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a force of soul that nothing disturbs ; a serenity, the salutary example of which spreads everywhere confidence and hope.

It will meet, I am sure, with your sincerest wishes, if I include in my congratulations to you your faithful co-workers of the general staff, who arrange the plan of operations, and who, like you, are wholly absorbed in their sacred task.

During the terrible weeks you have passed through you have increased the effect of the brilliant victory of the Marne by the no less brilliant defence of Flanders, and thanks to the inspiration which those around you find in you, everything points to new successes, for there is perfect unity of view in the high command, an active co-operation between the allied armies, and brilliant tactics and a wise co-ordination of the different branches of the service. As the result the Standards of the Allies have but one heart and one spirit, and individuals willingly sacrifice their lives when the general welfare is at stake.

Midst this sublime devotion of a free people, the representatives of the land have not been the least eager to pay their debt to their country, and the high officials, who are here to-day to offer to the Army the ardent wishes of the two Houses of Parliament, will permit me to join with them in expressing my emotion

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at the recollection of the members of Parliament who fell, dead or wounded, on the battlefield.

The sorrows and the horrors of this dreadful war will not diminish the enthusiasm of our troops ; the terrible losses sustained by the nation will not affect its constancy nor its determination. France has employed every means to save mankind from a catastrophe without precedent ; she knows that, if a repetition of it is to be avoided, she has, together with her Allies, to destroy its causes ; she knows that the present generation bears the responsibility for the future ; she knows that, unless we disavow all our history, we have not the right to repudiate our centuries-old mission of civilization and liberty.

An indecisive victory and a precarious peace will expose, on the morrow, French genius to new insults of that refined barbarism which assumes a mask of science the better to gratify its domineering instincts. France will pursue to the end, thanks to the unbreakable union of all her children and to the help of her Allies, the work of liberating Europe, and when success will crown our efforts she will find, under the auspices of her dead, a life a great deal more intense in its glory, in its unity, in its security.

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